Policing community problems:

Exploring the role of formal social control in shaping collective efficacy

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Abstract

Research finds police-led crime control interventions focusing on places and involving partnerships tend to yield positive crime control outcomes. Some scholars argue that these positive outcomes are achieved when police use place-based, partnership-oriented interventions to facilitate and encourage collective efficacy (CE). The corollary being that these CE-enhancing efforts lead to less crime. Nevertheless differentiating the police activities that impact CE across different types of communities is not well understood. This paper examines the role of police in shaping CE in two contrasting communities. Using in-depth interviews with residents and key informants we find that police are most likely to enhance CE when they foster a sense of effectiveness, use inclusive and partnership-oriented strategies and when they implement strategies in a manner that encourages perceptions of police legitimacy. Moreover, if police can maintain or cultivate a sense of empowerment among community residents, they are more likely to foster CE. Yet the role of police in enhancing CE is different in different community types. We discuss the implications of these findings for policy and practice.

Keywords

Collective efficacy, informal social control, formal control, police effectiveness, police legitimacy, police strategies.

Introduction

Police-led crime control interventions that focus on places and involve partnerships tend to bring about positive crime control outcomes (e.g. Mazerolle and Ransley, 2006; Mazerolle et al., 2006; Skogan and Hartnett, 1997; Weisburd and Eck, 2004). Some scholars argue that when police use these place-focused, partnership-oriented interventions to facilitate and encourage collective efficacy (CE), such efforts may lead to less crime (Renauer, 2007; Scott, 2002). Others suggest police effectiveness is important to CE (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Silver and Miller, 2004), whereas Kochel (2012: 389) argues legitimacy is key, and that when police are perceived as illegitimate they weaken the '…foundation on which neighborhoods can build consensus about the appropriate behaviors to expect in the neighborhood' (see also LaFree, 1998; Sun et al., 2004). However, while numerous studies explore the antecedents of CE (e.g. Morenoff et al., 2001; Wickes, 2010), few studies consider the role of policing.

Differentiating the police activities that may (or may not) facilitate CE across different community types is, therefore, not well understood in the literature. While it is true that a few studies examine the relationship between police and CE (Kochel, 2012; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Renauer, 2007; Scott, 2002; Silver and Miller, 2004), scholars are not in agreement as to *what exactly it is* about police or policing that is most important to CE. The focus has been, primarily, on disentangling the effects of police effectiveness, legitimacy, and different types of policing strategies, on other outcomes such as the willingness to cooperate with the police (e.g. Murphy et al., 2008; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003). Research has not yet extricated the effects of these elements of policing on CE. If police are to encourage and maintain the informal controls

crucial to the crime control and prevention in communities, it is important to determine *what exactly* the police can do to achieve this goal.

This paper examines the role of police in shaping CE in two contrasting communities. Using in-depth interviews with residents and key informants, we compare perceptions of police in one collectively efficacious community and one community low in CE. We begin with a review of the literature, highlighting the key research propositions to emerge about policing and CE. We then describe the present research, our key findings and theoretical and policy implications. Our research shows that citizen views of police vary across the two communities in our study and that these views are associated with different levels of CE. In our structurally disadvantaged, high crime and ethnically diverse community, we find that police may encourage CE by engaging with the community and demonstrating fair treatment. In our contrasting community, residents felt they had the skills to elicit formal control when necessary, yet preferred to see less police presence in their community. Overall, we conclude that police are most likely to enhance CE when they demonstrate effectiveness employ inclusive and partnership-oriented strategies and enforce the law in a legitimate manner. Moreover, if police can maintain or cultivate a sense of empowerment when intervening in community problems, they are more likely to foster CE. We suggest that the role of police in enhancing CE is, and should be, different in different community types.

Collective Efficacy and Policing

CE is central to our understanding of the spatial distribution of crime. Defined as 'social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good,' CE is found to mediate the relationship between structural characteristics and

violent crime in the United States, Sweden, and Australia (Sampson et al., 1997: 918; see also Mazerolle et al., 2010; Sampson and Wikstrom, 2008). Thus in communities where residents trust one another and share a willingness to engage in informal social control, communities experience less crime, regardless of a neighbourhood's structural characteristics (Sampson et al., 1997). While studies find collectively efficacious communities experience fewer social problems, less is known about the 'neighborhood contexts and policies that promote collective efficacy' (Sampson, 2004: 108). The role of social ties in facilitating the willingness to intervene has received particular attention in this regard, yet scholars question the 'centrality of social and organizational ties' to informal social control (Silver and Miller, 2004: 555).

In light of this, Sampson (2002) and Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) suggest that rather than focus on social ties, research should consider links between community residents and public institutions, and the interactions between formal and informal controls in communities. Although the police are one only one of the many institutions that may influence community capacity, they have a particular stake in the informal social control activities of community residents. Police rely on the public to act as their 'eyes and ears', to report crime and disorder to the police, and to otherwise intervene informally when community problems arise (Grinc, 1994). It is therefore in the best interests of the police to promote informal social control (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003).

A resulting small body of theory and research examines the relationship between policing and CE and from this three overlapping propositions emerge. The first is that police *effectiveness* encourages CE (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Silver and Miller, 2004). When police perform their job well to effectively control crime and respond to community problems and calls for service, citizens feel they can rely on the police and will subsequently be willing to take the risks

associated with intervention (Kääriäinen and Sirén, 2011; Silver and Miller, 2004; Warner, 2007). Alternatively, residents who believe that the police in their community are 'ineffective' may 'feel vulnerable when considering whether to try to stop street deviance' (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003: 383). Silver and Miller (2004, p. 558) suggest that communities will share a 'common conception of the quality of policing in the local area' and that this common idea about policing will help to explain variations in CE across communities.

The second research proposition suggests police *legitimacy* influences CE in communities (Kochel, 2012; LaFree, 1998; Sun et al. 2004). Police legitimacy, defined as trust in the police and the obligation to obey police (Tyler, 2006), is believed to be important in establishing a generalised sense of trust in communities and in the development of shared norms for intervention (see also Kochel, 2012; LaFree, 1998; Sun et al., 2004). Kochel (2012: 389) explains that as police are representatives of the law and assist in upholding norms for behaviour, when police are perceived as illegitimate they weaken the 'foundation on which neighborhoods can build consensus' about 'appropriate behaviors'. Police legitimacy is therefore expected to influence CE by contributing to norms for behaviour in communities.

Police legitimacy is distinct from effectiveness, as legitimacy is influenced by fair treatment and procedural justice, in addition to instrumental concerns about policing (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003). While numerous studies distinguish the effects of police legitimacy – trust in police and the obligation to obey the police – and effectiveness – the perceived ability of police to prevent and control crime – on a range of outcomes (e.g. Murphy et al., 2008; Tyler and Fagan, 2008), current research on CE does not. For example, while Silver and Miller (2004) find the perceived ability of the police to prevent and control crime and respond to community

problems is important to informal social control, they do not measure legitimacy or procedural justice (see also Renauer, 2007; Sun et al., 2004). Kochel (2012) provides a more robust test of the relationship between policing and CE by distinguishing between police legitimacy and police service quality. She finds that service quality and police misconduct, rather than the perceived obligation to obey the police, are important to CE in the neighbourhood context of Trinidad and Tobago – a country that experiences high levels of dissatisfaction with police, disadvantage and crime.

The third research proposition to emerge from the literature suggests that different types of policing *strategies* may either promote or constrain CE (Renauer, 2007; Scott, 2002). Certain community, problem-oriented and partnership-based policing strategies are expected to increase CE by encouraging community 'self-help' and increasing access to police resources (Velez, 2001: 518; see also Slocum et al., 2010). Specifically, strategies that are place-based and which promote police-community problem-solving and build relationships with the community, are anticipated to encourage CE (Renauer, 2007; Scott, 2002). In contrast, some traditional policing strategies may constrain CE. For example, police raids, crackdowns and minority targeting or profiling by police, can result in conflict between police and citizens, and fear or distrust of police (Kane, 2005; Slocum et al., 2010). If police are perceived to be targeting particular groups for enforcement and treating suspects with disrespect, a strong police enforcement presence may reduce CE by decreasing the perceived legitimacy of the police.

As with research on police effectiveness and legitimacy, the relationship between police strategies and CE has received limited empirical attention. Several studies examine community processes similar to CE such as informal social control, social capital and involvement in crime

prevention activities, however we are not aware of any research that examines the direct relationship between people's perceptions of policing strategies and CE (as measured by Sampson and his colleagues). For example, Pattavina and colleagues (2005) find police-community relationships are important to resident's involvement in crime prevention activities. Scott (2002) finds increased accessibility of the police is positively related to community social capital. Similarly, Lombardo and colleagues (2010) infer a positive relationship between community policing strategies and informal social control (but do not explicitly test this) and, somewhat surprisingly, Renauer (2007) finds police attendance at community meetings is negatively related to informal social control.[1] While these findings point to some relationship between policing strategies and CE, the explication of this relationship requires further empirical attention.

The Present Research

The extant literature thus identifies three ways that policing might enhance CE: by improving citizen perceptions of police effectiveness, by enhancing perceptions of police legitimacy and by implementing inclusive types of police strategies. Past research, however, is silent as to how police effectiveness, legitimacy and strategies might differentially impact upon CE in different types of communities. The primary goal of the current study is therefore to examine the relationship between police effectiveness, legitimacy, policing strategies and CE in order to determine the salience of each of these elements of policing. Here we examine the relationship between policing and CE within and across two geographically defined, purposively selected communities in Brisbane using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with residents and key informants to shed light on the relationship between policing and CE.[2]

Site Selection

We selected the communities from a sample pool of suburbs included in the Community Capacity Study (CCS) survey. The CCS survey is a longitudinal study of community processes in Brisbane involving a random probability sample of 4,324 people in 148 suburbs in the Brisbane Statistical Division (BSD) (Wickes et al., 2011).[3] We used the CCS data as it provides measures of CE for Brisbane suburbs or communities. To select communities, we ranked the CCS suburbs according to CE and examined the characteristics of communities (i.e. level of CE, crime rate, socio-economic status (SES) and ethnic composition) falling into the top and bottom quintiles.[4] We selected two communities as our case study sites: Campbellville and The Grove.[5]

Campbellville is approximately 15 km from the Brisbane CBD, with a population of around 13,000 people. It is a large residential suburb, characterised by low CE and low SES. In this community, there is a high proportion of state-owned housing, the unemployment rate is more than double the national average, and the median household income is well below the national average (ABS, 2006). Campbellville is also ethnically diverse, with over 30 percent of residents born overseas (ABS, 2006). Key ethnic groups in Campbellville include Vietnamese and Pacific Islanders as well as a sizable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) population (ABS, 2006). Additionally, Campbellville has a high rate of violent crime, falling into the top 20 percent of the 148 CCS suburbs. Campbellville therefore represents a typical disadvantaged community, as depicted in the CE literature, with high levels of disadvantage and crime, ethnic heterogeneity, and low levels of CE (Sampson et al., 1997). These characteristics make Campbellville a useful site for examining the relationship between policing and CE. With low CE, the literature suggests community residents will hold negative views about police

effectiveness and legitimacy, which undermines informal social control. Moreover in accordance with the high rate of crime we would expect police to provide a more visible enforcement presence and, according to Renauer (2007), a greater number of police-community engagement strategies.

In comparison, The Grove is a relatively ethnically homogenous community with a moderate rate of violent crime (just below the mean rate for the CCS sample), and above average SES (ABS, 2006). The Grove is a residential suburb located approximately 10 km from the Brisbane CBD, with a population of around 2,000 people. In contrast to Campbellville, the unemployment rate is below the national average, while the median household income is above the national average (ABS, 2006). Although the proportion of people born overseas exceeds the national average, the majority of overseas migrants were born in New Zealand and England (ABS, 2006). The Grove is a useful site to examine when considering the relationship between policing and CE, particularly when contrasted with Campbellville. With high CE, the literature predicts that residents in The Grove might believe the police to be legitimate and be satisfied with police responses to community problems or alternatively, residents might be dissatisfied with police effectiveness due to the moderate rate of crime (Silver and Miller, 2004). In regard to police strategies, a moderate rate of crime leads us to anticipate that police would provide a visible, but not overbearing enforcement presence in the community (Renauer, 2007; Silver and Miller, 2004).

The Study Participants

Participants in our study comprised residents and key informants from The Grove and Campbellville. We recruited community residents from the CCS survey sample. The CCS

sampled 20 to 35 residents in each of the 148 communities. In the current study, we contacted all CCS respondents who resided in Campbellville or The Grove, and were interested in participating in future research (N=47). Ten community residents were interviewed in Campbellville and 13 were interviewed in The Grove (response rates were 40 and 59 percent respectively).[6] Descriptive statistics for the resident sample and the CCS sample from which these participants were drawn are provided in Table 1 below.[7]

[Insert Table 1]

Consistent with prior community research, key informants were selected according to their position in, and knowledge of, the community (Krannich and Humphrey, 1986). Particular attention was focused on soliciting key informants to represent the Pacific Islander, ATSI and Vietnamese ethnic groups in Campbellville as the CCS the resident sample was not representative of these key ethnic groups. Key informants were identified through the telephone directory and snowball sampling. Eleven key informants were interviewed for Campbellville including a police officer, a local council representative, a primary school principal, a real estate agent, a representative of the Pacific Islander people, a Vietnamese community group employee, a charity worker, and three social workers (who worked with the Pacific Islander, ATSI and Vietnamese people in Campbellville). Six key informants were interviewed for The Grove, including a police officer, a local government representative, a high school vice-principal, a local newspaper editor, a sporting club representative, and a member of the local Parents and Citizens Association. The total sample size was 21 community residents and key informants for Campbellville and 20 for The Grove.

Analytic Approach

Interview questions were constructed around participants' willingness to intervene in community problems and community cohesion as well as perceptions of police effectiveness, legitimacy, policing strategies, and experiences with police in their community. By asking participants to report on both their perception of police in their community, and whether they and their neighbours were willing to intervene in community problems, we were able to examine whether participants' perceptions of CE were driven in part by their perceptions of police and formal control in their communities. Moreover, by teasing out participants' views of police effectiveness, legitimacy and policing strategies we are able to disentangle what it is about police or policing that is most salient for CE in these contrasting communities. Interviews lasted between 1 and 2.5 hours and were recorded and transcribed. NVIVO computer software was utilised when coding the interviews. Thematic nodes were created to capture the broad themes of police effectiveness, legitimacy, policing strategies, and CE. Subcategories were added during coding as new themes arose. Interview findings are discussed below.

Findings

Perceptions of Collective Efficacy

In the Grove, levels of CE and SES were higher than in Campbellville. According to prior research on CE we would therefore expect that residents in The Grove would report higher levels of trust among neighbours and the belief that neighbours would be more willing to intervene in community problems, when compared to Campbellville (Sampson et al., 1997).

Interviews with residents and key informants in The Grove and Campbellville suggested that this was the case.

Residents of The Grove generally reported that both they and their neighbours would be willing to intervene in community problems. For example, Serena, a resident of The Grove, recalled a situation where she and her neighbours had intervened:

> There was a car parked on the street…. It was there for months and months and I know the neighbor across the road rang the council and I rang the council. We rang the police and all that so I know that they're doing the same sort of things that we are.

These accounts are typical of residents' understandings of intervention in The Grove: they reported feeling similarly to their neighbours and believed that their neighbours would take action if problems arose. Consistent with the findings of Sampson and colleagues (1997) and Wickes (2010) about communities with high SES, the interviews suggest that residents of The Grove shared norms for action, and a willingness to intervene in community problems.

In contrast, Campbellville residents did not share common norms for action. While the majority of the Anglo-Saxon residents interviewed reported a willingness to intervene in community problems, both residents and key informants believed particular ethnic, SES, and age groups were reluctant to 'get involved' when problems arose. Interviewees in Campbellville described Vietnamese, Pacific Islander, and ATSI people as less likely to intervene in problems, particularly when intervention involved contacting the police. For example, Nancy, a resident of Campbellville, believed her neighbours were unlikely to intervene in community problems 'because they're all Vietnamese'. Similarly, residents believed young people and those of lower

SES were less likely to contact the police about problems. People in Campbellville thus expressed uncertainty as to whether other residents in the community would intervene when problems arose.

Disagreement around norms for intervention in Campbellville can be partly attributed to low social cohesion and cultural differences. Roberta, a Campbellville resident, believed low social cohesion was associated with language and cultural barriers: ‘we're not a cohesive group…there are an enormous amount of cultures’. Roberta suggested that language barriers reduced the likelihood that Campbellville residents would work together outside of their own ethnic group to solve problems: ‘English...is not their strength, so they feel more comfortable talking to their own community’. In addition to acting as a barrier to collective action, the disconnectedness from the broader community felt by some residents in Campbellville might explain their uncertainty as to whether neighbours would intervene.

The relationship between ethnic heterogeneity, social cohesion, shared norms and values, and the willingness to intervene is well established in the CE literature (e.g. Sampson et al., 1997). The accounts of residents in The Grove and Campbellville, align with prior research connecting social cohesion and trust with the willingness to intervene, and demonstrates that CE varies according to neighbourhood structural characteristics (Mazerolle et al., 2010; Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson and Wikstrom, 2008). In The Grove, residents had relatively high SES, shared norms for action, and, perhaps in consequence, felt confident that neighbours would intervene when confronted with community problems. In contrast, Campbellville residents experienced structural disadvantage, ethnic heterogeneity, low social cohesion and uncertainty around norms for intervention. However while structural characteristics and social relationships

are clearly important to our understanding of CE, the key purpose of this study is to explore additional antecedents of CE in communities. The remainder of this paper considers the relationship between policing and CE.

A Common Conception of Police Effectiveness

Silver and Miller (2004) propose that when police are perceived to be effective in preventing and controlling crime, and are responsive to calls for service, community residents will be more willing to intervene in community problems (see also Kääriäinen and Sirén, 2011; Renauer, 2007; Warner, 2007). Yet in Campbellville, residents' perceptions of police effectiveness were not uniform. While many of the Anglo-Saxon residents reported that police in Campbellville were effective, some suggested police did not respond promptly to calls for service and were under-resourced. Moreover, perceptions of police effectiveness varied according to ethnicity, age and SES. For example, Emily, a social worker in Campbellville, reflected that some of her Vietnamese clients were reluctant to call the police as they did not believe the police to be effective. Emily reported that this was due to slow response times and that often police did not 'even bother' to respond to calls for service. Similarly, Jane, a community resident, felt that young people were particularly 'targeted by the police'; while Angus, a local real estate agent, felt that the unemployed, state-housing residents 'who may be involved in issues that…police may be interested in' believe 'the cops are useless'.

These findings reflect prior research that finds perceptions of police effectiveness and contact with police are highly variable across specific groups (Brown and Benedict, 2002). Thus it is no surprise that the variation in these perceptions might be accentuated in heterogeneous communities like Campbellville. Currently, the literature about policing and CE in

neighbourhoods or communities does not ,however, consider how particular communities might experience diverse perceptions of police. For example, Silver and Miller (2004) suggest community residents will share a view of police effectiveness in their community, which informs CE. In Campbellville however residents' perceptions of police varied considerable and it was those groups who held negative attitudes about police effectiveness that were believed to be less likely to intervene in community problems.

In comparison, residents of The Grove were less diverse in their perceptions of police effectiveness. The majority of residents interviewed reported that the police were doing a good job. For example, Serena's view was fairly typical of that expressed by residents: 'Well from my experience [the police do] a good job. We've had a couple of times when we've had to call them out and they've always been…good'. Accounts of residents and key informants in The Grove were in line with Silver and Miller's (2004) assertion that community residents share a common conception of police effectiveness. Here the majority of community residents were satisfied with police performance and were willing to intervene when community problems arose.

Legitimacy and Policing Strategies

Scholars propose police legitimacy is important to CE, because police signal norms for behaviour to community residents (Kochel, 2012; LaFree, 1998; Sun et al., 2004). Specifically, when police are perceived to be 'fair and equitable' in their behaviour, residents may be more willing to intervene (or call the police) when community problems arise (Sun et al., 2004: 35; see also Kääriäinen and Sirén, 2011; Kochel, 2012; LaFree, 1998; Tyler and Fagan, 2008). Prior research also suggests perceptions of fair treatment are influenced by policing strategies, and that

police enforcement strategies, in particular, may lead to distrust in police and a loss of legitimacy (Kane, 2005).

In Campbellville, while many of the Anglo-Saxon residents interviewed expected fair treatment by the police, interviewees reported young people and members of the ATSI, Pacific Islander and Vietnamese ethnic groups distrusted police, due to the perceived strong police enforcement presence. Participants reported witnessing frequent police law enforcement in Campbellville; noting traffic stops, drug raids, and arrests as common occurrences. Interviewees related these enforcement practices to unfair treatment. For example, Carolyn, a social worker with the ATSI people in Campbellville, reported that police targeted ATSI people for enforcement and treated them with disrespect:

> …they're disrespectful to Indigenous people…they pull our black kids up all the time just as they're walking along the street; accuse them of things; ask them where they're going, what are they doing? …They're really, yeah, just disrespectful, rude, arrogant.

Similarly, Sandra, an Anglo-Saxon resident, reported that her son had been unfairly targeted by the police in Campbellville:

> [All he] did was look to see if he knew them…Next thing the policeman…put on the sirens and lights…and chased him…they jumped out of the patrol car and ran up…They said 'what did you look at us for'... this is the harassment of the children in Campbellville.

Thus, in Campbellville, a strong police enforcement presence increased opportunities for negative interactions with police, which not only diminished perceived legitimacy, but also

discouraged some residents from intervening in community problems. This is consistent with prior research that finds perceptions of over-enforcement are related to neighbourhood context, perceptions of legitimacy (Kane, 2005), and CE (Kochel, 2012). It also resonates with the findings of Slocum and colleagues (2010) that negative contact with police reduces the willingness to intervene in community problems. The case of Campbellville also adds to our understanding of the relationship between policing and CE in diverse communities. We find that negative perceptions of police legitimacy reduce the willingness to intervene for those groups more likely to experience police enforcement. Viewed in this way negative perceptions of police enforcement strategies, increased contact with police, and the resulting distrust and perceived illegitimacy of police, strongly influence perceptions of CE.

In comparison, residents of The Grove generally judged the police to be trustworthy and procedurally fair; however, this was associated with *limited* opportunities for contact with police. For the few who contacted the police to report crime, interactions were perceived positively. For example, Tara, a resident of The Grove reported: 'any interaction I've had with a policeman's been reasonable' though she qualified her statement by saying that she 'hadn't had very many interactions'. Similarly, interviewees believed The Grove was not subject to a strong police enforcement presence. As Richard, a local school vice-principal, notes: while police were visible in their patrol of the community, they were not 'oppressive' in their duties as he believed was the case in other Australian communities.

With limited opportunities for interactions with police in The Grove, or indeed limited opportunities to view policing practices or strategies more broadly, residents drew on their own expectations of what police *should* do when responding to people of a particular SES. For

example Jennifer, a local resident, believed: 'the more educated you are the less likely you're to be unfairly treated'. Similarly, Ellen, another resident, believed police interactions with her would be 'pleasant, respectful, honest, [and] helpful' and believed this would be especially true of her 'suburb in particular'. Ellen contrasted resident behaviour in The Grove to other places where people 'call the police pigs' and engage in disorderly conduct. She felt police would be 'antagonistic' to the people who lived in these suburbs which would result in disrespectful treatment by the police. The case of The Grove is therefore consistent with the theoretical relationship between perceived police legitimacy and higher CE (Kochel 2012; LaFree, 1998; Sun et al., 2004). However, in this community residents' perceptions of police legitimacy were driven more by the *absence* of interactions with the police, and their own expectations of police, than by actual experiences of legitimate policing. Thus in communities where crime is low and contact with the police is infrequent, what police do may be largely independent of the development of CE as the relationship between police legitimacy and CE is driven more by expectations than experiences. .

Community Policing and Empowerment

Scholars propose that community policing strategies designed to build relationships between police and community residents and encourage community 'self-help' are likely to have a positive influence on CE (Velez, 2001: 518; see also Renauer, 2007; Scott, 2002). When community residents feel that they 'get to know' police in their community, and establish channels of communication with police, it is expected that residents will feel more confident to intervene in community problems (Renauer, 2007; Scott, 2002; Velez, 2001). The accounts of

participants in our study however, demonstrate this relationship was not evident in Campbellville or The Grove.

In Campbellville, both residents and key informants noted that police participated in a range of community activities, often focused on building police-community relationships. Janine, a Pacific Islander representative, described police involvement in the organisation of a multicultural festival. She noted that police were there to both patrol the event and 'mix and mingle with everybody'. Similarly, interviewees noted that Police Liaison Officer's (PLOs) present in Campbellville were concerned with building relationships between police and youth, ATSI, Vietnamese and Pacific Islander people. Still others noted police worked with specific community groups to resolve problems in Campbellville. Though in contrast to Renauer (2007) and Scott's (2002) suggestions, building relationships and collaborating with community residents did not facilitate CE among community residents. Despite attempts to engage with the ATSI, Vietnamese, Pacific Islander's and young people, members of these groups, remained less willing to work with others to resolve community problems. Even as police engaged with the community, these groups continued to view the police as ineffective and illegitimate, due, in part, to their experiences with police enforcement. We argue that in communities where particular groups are targeted for police enforcement and where police are not viewed as procedurally just, legitimate or effective, they will report low CE, despite attempts at police-community engagement.

In contrast to Campbellville, residents from The Grove struggled to recall recent attempts by police to build relationships with community members or collaborate around problems. When we asked Luke, a resident of The Grove, whether police worked with community residents

to solve problems he replied: 'I think they have at times….but it seems to have tapered off over the years'. Other residents agreed that police-community collaboration around problem-solving had declined due to the perception that there was a relative lack of problems in The Grove. However residents were satisfied with this lack of police interaction as they equated the absence of police to the absence of community problems. Moreover, despite the lack of police-community engagement in The Grove, residents felt confident in their ability to contact police and other officials about local problems. Jennifer reported that police and the local council cared about responding to problems in The Grove:

> …because of the influence that could be had in higher places...Because you belong to that socioeconomic bracket that can put pressure, know how to do it, know how to lobby the right people.

Similarly, Tara believed people in The Grove would 'probably be more likely to go and visit [a local government representative] or they're more likely to write a letter to the paper'. Tara went on to attribute this to education, and employment status suggesting that 'people who are used to writing letters for work' would 'feel comfortable writing lots of things, it's easier to sit down and write a letter'. Here, residents did not desire that the police or other authorities make an effort to interact with residents, nor was it viewed as salient for the development of CE, rather they drew on their own resources to intervene and access authorities when needed. These findings are consistent with those of social psychologists who relate education to collective action (Oliver, 1984; Verba and Nie, 1972). As Oliver (1984: 603) explains 'organizational activity usually requires skills that are more common among educated people'.

This sense of collective empowerment was not evident in Campbellville. Here residents did not seem to possess the knowledge of the processes or the skills required to engage agents of formal control (e.g. write a letter of complaint or make a phone call to government or police officials). In regard to intervention, Sandra suggested residents 'don't know where to start and don't know how to go about it. Who do we approach? Who deals with it? Are we going to be listened to?' Jessica, a resident of Campbellville, confirmed she did not know who to contact in regard to community problems: 'Yeah but I don't know who? Do you ring them direct or what?' Michael, a local Neighbourhood Watch representative agreed, suggesting few residents knew how to make a complaint to officials: 'it's a fair size that wouldn't know how to...a lot of people don't know how to communicate'. Again, this is consistent with Oliver's (1984: 608) findings that those with higher-education and therefore the 'skills for organizational participation' are more likely to be actively involved in civic action. Thus, while police were trying to build relationships with residents, and collaborate to solve problems, many residents were unsure as to how to engage formal control to respond to problems and did not possess the skills required to navigate the system.

Velez (2001: 845) finds that when a person can 'get satisfaction out of talking to public officials' in one's neighbourhood, victimisation risk is low. In Campbellville, many residents did not feel they could easily access public officials. Not surprisingly, this community had low CE and higher rates of crime. These findings highlight the importance of targeted community policing strategies concerned with building community capacity to engage with formal control bodies. Collaborative policing strategies, without a concomitant focus on empowerment, may be unlikely to positively impact on a community's CE. For Campbellville more specifically, police must also be viewed as procedurally just when dealing with particular groups in order to reduce

problematic relationships with the police. We believe these two approaches will be critical in developing CE among residents across this community.

Discussion and Conclusion

Differentiating the police activities that influence CE across different types of communities is not well understood in the literature. If police are to encourage and maintain the informal controls that are so crucial to the prevention and control of crime, it is important to determine exactly what the police can do to achieve this goal. This study sought to develop a nuanced understanding of the relationship between policing and CE, exploring how the interplay between police effectiveness, legitimacy, and policing strategies might variously impact upon CE.

Our research suggests citizen perceptions of police effectiveness and legitimacy are important to CE. People who perceived the police to be effective and legitimate were generally those more willing to intervene in community problems. Yet, in contrast to the presumptions of prior research, citizens in ethnically diverse, disadvantaged communities may differ significantly in the way they view the effectiveness and legitimacy of their local police. For example, in Campbellville, perceptions of legitimacy were poor among groups who perceived excessive enforcement, and those who perceived the police to be illegitimate did not intervene in community problems. In The Grove, police legitimacy was associated with CE, yet this relationship was based on perceived expectations devoid of police interaction.

Additionally, we find that when police can maintain or cultivate a sense of empowerment when intervening in community problems, they will be more likely to foster CE across the

community. Accounts from participants in this study indicate that police-community engagement strategies may not encourage CE in the absence of strategies that empower community residents to access police and government authorities. Police are thus most likely to enhance CE when they pay equal attention to communicating effectiveness, employing inclusive and partnership-oriented strategies, and implementing strategies in a manner that encourages perceived legitimacy.

Though we focus on two unique cases at a single point in time, these findings have important implications for criminological theory and police practice. First, the relationship between policing and CE is not complete without considering three different elements of police: how residents perceive police effectiveness, whether or not they believe the police to be legitimate, and how people view different types of policing strategies in their communities. In Campbellville we found that while police were engaging in strategies expected to increase CE such as police-community engagement and police-community collaboration, residents viewed police to be unfairly targeting particular groups for enforcement. Thus in some community types, procedural justice, legitimacy, police effectiveness, community policing strategies, and police enforcement strategies all impact upon the development of CE.

Second, our findings suggest that police effectiveness, procedural justice and legitimacy, as well as police enforcement and community engagement strategies, have differential effects on CE across different places. In economically advantaged, homogeneous communities like The Grove, it may not be necessary to actively promote procedural justice and legitimacy, or to engage in particular community policing strategies in order to reinforce collectively efficacious beliefs. This is because residents already expect fair treatment from the police and in the

absence of serious problems, these expectations go unchallenged. Thus 'policing' may have little influence on CE. In comparison, in ethnically diverse, disadvantaged communities, like Campbellville, police actions appear critical for CE.

Finally, this study suggests that strategies focusing on empowering citizens to activate formal control bodies may positively influence CE as will those that centre on relationship-building and the development of legitimate and procedurally just practices, especially among groups who have problematic relationships with police. Tyler and colleagues (2010) highlight the importance of procedural justice in ethnically diverse communities. They find that perceptions of procedural justice and fairness predict the willingness to report terror-related risks among the American Muslims (willingness to intervene). This study also suggests that if police are to encourage CE, policing strategies designed to enhance perceptions of legitimacy and fairness which also empower citizens to take action are paramount. The use of procedurally just policing and relationship-building may open the channels of communication between the police and the community, and thus facilitate CE around community problems.

Overall, this study provides a nuanced exploration of the way in which different perceptions of police and policing might impact on perceptions of CE and indicates that the current policing-CE relationship needs to include perceptions of police effectiveness, procedural justice and legitimacy, police enforcement strategies and community engagement strategies. However, a one size fits all approach is not the answer as these elements of policing will differentially influence CE across contexts. For police, this means that while communicating effectiveness, legitimacy, and procedural justice is important in general, police will need to adapt their strategic focus to suit different community contexts if they are to facilitate and encourage

CE where it is needed most. As scholars suggest, informal social control practices engaged in by residents can be more important than actions taken by the police to reduce and prevent crime (Grinc, 2004; Silver and Miller, 2004). Similarly, as Kochel (2012: 414) says: CE is 'an important crime reduction tool'. If informal social control can achieve such ends, encouraging and facilitating community CE will, in turn, facilitate the reduction of crime and improve the resource capacity of the police

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Notes

1. Renauer (2007) attributes this unlikely finding to the higher incidence of community meetings involving the police in lower socio-economic neighbourhoods.

2. These interviews were partly funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant [DP0771785].

3. The BSD includes Brisbane City and the surrounds, and has a population of approximately two million people. Brisbane City is located on the east-coast of Australia and is the capital city of the state of Queensland.

4. It is important to note that the use of a suburb as a 'community' may be interpreted as problematic. However, as with prior neighbourhood research, the purpose of this study is to explore geographically defined communities (e.g. Sampson et al., 1997). Moreover, the CCS pilot study found respondents associated 'community' with the suburb in which they resided (Mazerolle et al., 2010).

5. Pseudonyms were used for the communities and for research participants to help preserve anonymity.

6. The difference in response rates between the communities was due to the high number of disconnected numbers in Campbellville. This was not surprising considering the high proportion of renters in disadvantaged suburbs (ABS, 2006).

7. It should be noted that there were some differences between the CCS sample and the sample of community residents interviewed for the current study. For example in Campbellville, participants in the current study were more likely to own their home and to have a university education that in the CCS sample. These differences may skew the findings of the current study.

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Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Community Residents in Campbellville and The Grove

	Campbellville		The Grove	
Demographics	**Sample Mean or % (N=10)**	**CCS Sample Mean or % (N=27)**	**Sample Mean or % (N=13)**	**CCS Sample Mean or % (N=24)**
Age	53.00	52.41	52.00	45.71
Gender				
Male	40.00	48.10	38.46	50.00
Female	60.00	51.90	61.54	50.00
Home Ownership				
Own	40.00	25.90	92.31	83.30
Rent	60.00	74.10	7.69	12.50
Marital Status				
Married	30.00	33.30	61.54	50.00
Not Married	70.00	66.70	38.46	50.00
Level of Education				
No Schooling	0.00	3.70	0.00	0.00
Primary/Secondary	70.00	70.30	23.02	25.00
Certificate (trade)	10.00	18.50	7.69	16.70
University Qualifications	20.00	7.40	69.29	54.20